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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY XV
PART III. GENERAL STRUCTURE OF SOCIETIES
CHAPTER VII. THE SOCIAL FRONTIERS (CONTINUED)
SECTION VI. THE ROMAN WORLD (CONTINUED)

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We have seen that the Roman ceremony relating to the delimitation of the city, a preliminary which is the prime condition of all social structure, was modeled upon Etruscan ceremonies. These in their turn rested upon analogous beliefs derived from similar economic conditions antecedent to the division of lands among families and the foundation of towns in Greece. Everywhere the reality is constantly the same. According to times and circumstances, its interpretation and its forms alone vary. Always and everywhere also the social fact, whether it is military or peaceful, has an economic foundation at once material and psychic.

With Greeks and Romans defeat brought in its train destruction of the social autonomy of the defeated group. It lost its frontier, with everything connected with it—the town with all its contents, living and dead, men and gods, goods, animals, and people. Thus the conquered city gave itself over entirely to the conqueror, with its territory and its population, including its ancestors. The formula of surrender or *deditio*, as given by Livy runs: “I give my person, my town, my land, the water which runs there, my boundary gods, my temples, my furniture, all the things that belong to the gods, I give these to the Roman people.”¹ The formula of surrender is also found in the *Amphitryon* of Plautus: “Urbem, agrum, aras, focos, seque uti dederent;”² and later: “dedunteque se divina humanaque people.”¹ The formula of surrender is also found in the “omnia, urbem et liberos.”³

¹ I, 38; VII, 31; XXVIII, 34. See also Polybius, XXXVI, 2.

² Vs. 71.

³ Vs. 101.

Moreover, in the military city, just as it is the military and at the same time religious chieftain who founds the city, by locating its boundaries, it is in like manner the chief who in case of defeat gives it up, and cedes the terminal gods and all the contents of the social group to the preservation of which these gods were supposed to be devoted. If the limits of the ancestral land were strict and continuous and if the town itself was guarded from its neighbors by its inclosure, nevertheless the latter was less closed than the domestic territory. The town communicated with the region beyond by gates. Its territory, although limited, had openings. It is remarkable that even in our language these openings recall the partly pacific character of their primitive function. Thus, for example, in the form of expression "to make overtures of peace" (*ouvertures*).

The ancient town was, in its normal situation, in harmonious relations with the surrounding agricultural domains; accordingly, with progress of inequality, the rural family estates finished by falling into the hands of residents of the town, or of great proprietors who located in the town and ceased to work their estates directly. Moreover, the town with its agricultural dependencies was more accessible to the stranger than the ancestral estate, whether that of the clan or of the tribe. If the city represented by the town and the annexed agricultural estates thus formed virtually the embryo of the modern state, and if it developed by conquest of new territories and of other cities, it is certain that it presented in its very structure the germs of pacific development. In the sociological differentiation resulting from the distinction between town and country there is a complication of structure which gives to the internal organization an importance almost as great as that belonging to the external structure. There is an exterior frontier and a center. In societies chiefly military this center will be as distinct as the frontier, but much less significant, because it is in pacific relations at least with the agricultural territory and population forming part of the same social aggregate with itself. This pacific tendency of urban centers cannot fail to increase in strength. For example, when, as in our day, they have become commercial and indus-

trial, they tend to break down and even to abolish entirely economic frontiers, and indirectly to do away with the whole military structure. If the ancient city advanced its frontiers by war, it developed equally within by peace. The essential forms of the state remained the same, but the increase of the social mass of the territory and of population was paralleled by an increasing differentiation in the interior, with a corresponding co-ordination of all parts of the society.

In Greece the Amphyctionic confederations succeeded at last in controlling and organizing certain relations between the states, and in imposing limitations even upon war. These confederations were concluded and commemorated by a sacrifice and a common meal. These international feasts, analogous to those of the clan, and equally to those which had continued to be the custom in each city, although in different degrees according to the greater or less force of the ancient communal traditions, were in reality at this moment the equivalent of the commercial and other treaties which led to the foundation of later political federations by basing them upon a durable economic understanding. In Greece, at Rome, and everywhere else the extension of external frontiers, or the abolition of them by reciprocal intersocial penetration, corresponded continually to a reduction and to a leveling of the different classes in the city. These classes dissolved gradually through the weakening of economic, religious, moral, and legal conditions; in a word, through more and more complete participation of all in the same religious and legal rights. In these cases the struggle was always between the democracy and the oligarchy, as well between the groups of the same society as between different states. At Rome the treaty between the *plebs* and the patricians was concluded at a certain moment in the same forms as the treaties between two different states: "foedere icto cum plebe," says Tacitus.⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus⁵ tells us that the *fetiales* acted as intermediaries, and he gives extracts from the treaty called *lex sacrata*.

All the internal development of Roman civilization progressed *pari passu* with the extension of its frontiers. How different in

⁴ IV, 6.

⁵ VI, 89.

everything that concerns these latter the situation was from that which it had been before the foundation, by a band of adventurers and of colonists, of a petty center as jealously closed as was primitive Rome! Then the Etruscans, separated from other populations by physical frontiers and by their ethnic traits, stretched from the Adige and the Alps to the Tiber. The center and the Mediterranean slope were inhabited by homogeneous tribes—Umbrians, Sabians, etc.—sometimes united and sometimes at war with each other. The Oscans formed a barrier across the peninsula from one sea to the other. The Oenotrians dominated down to the Sicilian strait. On the north of the Adige there were, besides the Veneti, and on the south of Mount Garganus, the Iapygi, an Illyrian people.

What a change if we place ourselves a few years before our era, under the empire! All the barriers and the ethnic and physical divisions are leveled. The whole peninsula bears the name of Italy, reserved in primitive times for the populations inhabiting Bruttium and Lucania. In reality, then, the name has no longer any ethnic or geographic significance.

Without speaking of Gaul, to which we shall later give attention in connection with the formation and development of the French nation, and of its successive frontiers and the conquest by Cæsar, Egypt, and then Galatia and Paphlagonia, were annexed about thirty years before our era. Even these annexations were brought about peacefully, inasmuch as they were only the transformation of earlier protectorates. At the beginning of the first century the empire is bounded on the north by the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euxine; on the east, by the Euphrates and the mountains of Syria and Judea; on the eastern side of the Mediterranean it stretched on the south to Egypt and to the southern shores of the great sea. It occupied these coasts as far as Mauritania. On the east it reached the ocean and the North Sea. The Mediterranean had thus become an internal waterway.

The principal purpose of Augustus had been to assure the defense of Gaul against the Germans, as that of Cæsar had been to guarantee Italy against invasions from the Gauls. Both were agents of that destiny which decreed that purely physical obstacles

could not serve as a frontier. A physical frontier consisting of a river or a mountain is not adequately defended except on the condition of being extended. The defensive force of these barriers is insufficient, even from the military point of view without reckoning that the social forces tend in addition to extend not merely beyond geographical divisions, but also military limits. Cæsar conquered Gaul to guarantee Italy and to assure Spain. Augustus was not content with completing the subjection of the tribes of the Alps, with establishing colonies in Narbonne, and with communicating regularly through them with the left bank of the Rhine, where he stationed his legions. The Rhine is only a physical frontier. To make it a social frontier, it was necessary to prevent access to it. Accordingly, Augustus advanced upon the right bank, where Varus met with decisive disaster. The advance was pushed into regions which no organized Roman social force had penetrated. The zone had not been prepared for conquest as a sphere of influence. Augustus contented himself, consequently, with annexing Norica, Pannonia, Mœsia, and the interior of Dalmatia, and with establishing secure continental communications between the eastern and the western parts of the empire.

Within these limits interior peace is assured—the fusion of races and varieties of peoples is complete. Hence all the legions are distributed in the northeast of the empire, upon the banks of the Rhine and of the Danube, in Syria, and in Egypt. All the military forces are at the extremities in proportion to the needs. This is the fusion which took place in the interior as well as in Africa from the year 37 of our era. All the legions are concentrated in Numidia. Nowhere is the empire any more in arms except against the barbarians; that is to say, against those who are outside the zone of the influence of Roman civilization, or in the zone still partially affected by this influence. The emperor, supreme war-lord, and thus the successor of primitive petty kings, governs directly the frontier countries. He is the head, the front (*frons, frontier*), armed for attack and defense. The frontiers called geographic are not used except as bases. They are worthless unless they are combined with a powerful human force to

make a social frontier. This military frontier has in reality to face in two directions. It must oppose two hostile forces: the exterior enemy, and the more positive and penetrating social forces of which it is the envelope, on one side; and, on the other, its own interior forces, which are incessantly developing themselves, and which oblige the military frontier to press forward in order to make place for stable, regular, and peaceful communication with the regions over which military protectorate is exercised. Thus progressive civilizations continually chase war before them, expelling it from their own borders and relegating it to remote frontiers. This is a constant law, applicable to petty states as well as to the largest empires.

All frontiers are social, even the military frontiers; and this is why they change continually. It is also why the military form is incapable, as historical experience has proved it to be, of establishing a regular mode of inter-social equilibrium, and why other forms must be substituted. It is a task for the sociologist to discover what is the most advantageous form in a civilization which, like ours, has long since passed the frontiers of the Roman power at the height of its grandeur; in which, nevertheless, narrow military frontiers not at all consistent with the real development of civilization continue to divide people who for a long time have shared a common life.

In his political testament Augustus advised contentment with the limits which he assigned to the empire. He was thus imbued with the idea that there are natural and fixed limits. On the contrary, every social frontier is variable as the society itself. Indeed, it merely expresses in reality the limits of the power of the society to penetrate surrounding territory—limits themselves variable and diverse, as we have seen, according to the nature of the energies or social capacities and external resistances. The advice of Augustus was wise in appearance, but impracticable. To defend itself, a society must be able to attack. Accordingly, from Augustus to Trajan, besides temporary acquisitions, the empire annexed Armenia as far as the Caucasus, as well as the eastern shore of the Euxine as far as the Cimmerian Bosphorus. It also absorbed Cappadocia, Lycia, and the whole

basin of the Euphrates and the Tigris. In Syria it extended its rule toward the interior beyond the mountains. In Egypt it approached the second cataract. In Europe it conquered, not only Thrace, but Dacia beyond the Danube. Accordingly, the mountains of Bastarnia became in this region the strategic point of its frontier against the barbarous Sarmatians. As in the case of the Danube, the empire again crossed the Rhine on the east, and it also made the *agri decumates* a defense in that quarter.

After Trajan the empire consolidates and completes its Asiatic possessions. In Europe it prolongs the holdings on the Euxine as far as the mouth of the Hypanis and the Borysthenes. The Euxine is thus, like the Mediterranean, transformed into an interior lake and route of communication. On the northwest the frontier is carried as far as the Elbe. From the center to the extremities the great routes, whether military or commercial, run together and complete each other in ramifications that carry out a common internal system of circulation for goods, for men, and for ideas. During all the imperial period the system of routes of communication was completed, not merely in Italy, but throughout the different regions to the remotest extremities. The analogy of their development with that of our railroads is remarkable. Strategic necessities exerted upon their direction an influence at first superior to that of economic needs. Of course, it was necessary in building them to take account of topography and of the situation of the large towns, but these were neglected frequently to such an extent that many very important ancient centers found themselves left outside of the great circulating system; and it is perhaps more exact to say that the position of the towns was henceforth determined by the routes of communication, than that the latter were located by the position of the towns.

And still, as always, the armed force is pursued by the overflowing civilization toward the extremities. There were thirty legions under Vespasian in place of twenty-eight in the year 95 A. D., and of twenty-five earlier; but now Dalmatia is stripped of troops. Anterior Spain has only two legions, Africa only one.

On the other hand, along the Danube there are seven legions in the place of four, and in the Orient eight in the place of six.

At the beginning of the second century the emperors were busy consolidating the frontiers. The movement toward expansion seems to have attained its extreme limit. The *vallum Hadriani* is built between the Solway and the Tyne, the *vallum Antonini* between the Clyde and the Forth. The *limes* of the Rhine is fortified like that of Rhætia. The rivers are thus not themselves the barriers against the barbarians; it is necessary to add to them a human force. The frontier therefore always presents the physical and human combination which is fundamentally the basis of every social phenomena. It is a social phenomenon, not purely physical nor purely human. It is nothing else than social.

If the empire is from this moment on the defensive, it is the intermediate stage between full development and decline. The frontiers are closed. Interior commerce suffers. Infiltration of barbarians takes place irresistibly, in spite of everything, and it prepares the way for the violent removal of the barriers. The establishments of military colonies, of Germanic or other origin, becomes more common. The empire under Constantine (324-37) moves its capital to Byzantium. At the beginning of the fifth century, in accordance with the *notitia dignitatum*, it is divided into four prefectures: that of the East, of Illyria, of Italy, and of Gaul; with fourteen dioceses and one hundred and twenty provinces. *Duces* and *comites* are charged with command at the frontiers. In the interior large private proprietorship is developed and strengthened more and more at the expense of small ownership and of the public domain. The forms of dismemberment and of the feudal hierarchy begin to be prepared. The dismemberment and the feudal régime would have occurred without the invasions of the barbarians. The latter, however, everywhere accentuated the military character of the process. If the external frontiers were removed, we must attribute it in large part to the transformation of internal forces, but always as we have shown, in their external equilibration, which could not be sudden, but adjusted itself slowly and gradually, like all the

great natural transformations. These do not appear in the form of cataclysms, except to superficial observers who consider only results.

The emperors had fringed the frontiers with castles, strongholds encircled by a fosse, and *limes*, especially where there was no river to serve as a barrier. The neighboring lands were the collective property of the bodies of troops, always accompanied by their women and children, with their counts and their dukes as military chieftains. They were literally *marches*. Lampridius says that Alexander Severus (222-35), after his wars in Mauritania, Illyria, and Armenia, "gave the lands taken from the enemy to the chiefs and the soldiers of the frontiers, on condition that their heirs should be soldiers, and that these lands should never pass into the possession of men who were not soldiers." Likewise Vopiscus says that Probus (276-82) "gave to his veterans certain lands in Isauria, adding that their male children should be under obligation to become soldiers at the age of eighteen years." Here is evidently one of the origins of the feudal contract, which was destined to reorganize the law of property by putting it in connection with military service and sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the Theodosian code⁶ contains a law of Honorius which justifies the supposition that the obligation of military service, even in his time, was not always strictly observed, and that chiefs of military colonies tended to make themselves independent. Thus as the law expresses it, "the lands which the far-seeing goodness of our early predecessors ceded to soldiers called *gentiles* [genuine military clans and an apparent return to primitive forms], to protect the frontiers of the empire, are according to reports that reach us, sometimes alienated to men who are not soldiers, but care must be taken that such holders of land shall perform their proper service in protecting the frontiers. If they fail in this duty, they must leave their lands and make them over to the *gentiles* and to the veterans." Failure to perform military duty accordingly resulted, as in later feudal times, in breaking the contract which was later a part of the tenure in

⁶ Book VII, title 15.

the case of all feudal lords. The consequence evidently was that the feudal régime was a natural development of property as organized by the law of the *quirites*, just as in our day commercial and industrial trusts are a development of economic law as it was formulated, for instance, by the Code Napoléon. The organization of the colonial system extended from the frontiers, where its form was military, to the interior, where it was at first entirely economic; but where it ended by developing a corresponding legal and political régime. Thus the colonial system, in extending itself from the frontiers to the interior of the empire, prepared the way for the system of serfdom. Labor that was free, as compared with ancient personal slavery, began to be considered more profitable than that of chattels. The latter accordingly passed into a species of colonists. Thus the whole society tended to model itself upon the combined economic and military structure of the frontier colonies. The development of large proprietorship could have no other end than a tremendous advantage on the part of the owners, and in proportion to their economic power the latter increased in military importance, in right to administer justice, and at length in all the attributes of political sovereignty, according to a hierarchical scheme in accordance with the military and economic structure of the new society. Feudalism and the whole Middle Age régime thus issued directly from the empire.

For two centuries the jurists had taught that provincial land was not susceptible of complete ownership; the *dominium* over it belonged by right of conquest to the state. The individual proprietors could have nothing more than possession and usufruct. In the fourth century of our era this distinction between Italian and provincial land no longer existed and for a long time the provincials were Roman citizens. At the same time, proprietorship lost its religious character. There was no longer any worship of the god Terminus. There came to be cultivators who were at the same time judges and surveyors, who fixed boundaries and settled conflicts. Violation of boundaries is no longer sacrilege, but crime. The military form of social structure, with the suppression of interior frontiers and their removal to a great

distance, greatly modified the forms of authority in the interior of the empire, and especially in Italy.

Meanwhile, under the empire from the close of the third century, there had already begun a modification of the general defensive limits. The countries protected by the *limes* of Germany and of Rhætia are lost. The frontier is brought back to the Rhine and the Danube. Dacia is lost, and in 368 a portion of Mesopotamia. General instability, greatest in the most distant regions, which are the latest acquired and the most exposed, the danger resulting from the excessive power of the governors of military provinces, the increasing multiplicity of conflicts of all kinds, and of problems to be solved far from the administrative centers, tended to increase the number of the contractions. While at the beginning of the first century there were only twenty-nine provinces at the end of the same century there were thirty-six; at the end of the second, forty-two; at the end of the third they had become ninety-six; and at the year 400 the number of provinces was one hundred and twenty.

Augustus had divided Italy into eleven regions or circuits. Some of these still had mountains and rivers as boundaries, but none of them any longer corresponded to earlier ethnic conditions. Italy had now become cut up into provinces scarcely at all corresponding with the physical characteristics of the older regions. These natural physical and ethnic traits had become secondary in importance and had passed into neglect. Thus there was a province of Liguria, but it was located north of the Po, with Milan as its capital.

While increasing differentiation of internal administration went on, a hierarchy established itself in the administration itself. Aurelian and Diocletian grouped all the provinces into twelve dioceses, and between the governors and the central power he created *vicarii*. The unity of the empire is only administrative, hence in reality very feeble in view of the new social situation. All in all, the political center has become as fragile as the frontier. Rome for centuries is no longer a military march nor a frontier capital (*caput, frons*). She is at the center of a world, but an already insufficient center, because the Orient is less solidly and

directly attached to it than central and occidental Europe. In the year 395 the empire is divided, and there are two prefects in each of its two parts. The division of the central power of necessity increased parallel with the shifting of frontiers and the internal social transformation. Under the later empire the principle of separating military and civic functions is to prevail. There will be masters of the forces, and under them counts and dukes whose prerogatives extend over regions of various size, sometimes including several provinces. Instead of being concentrated, the troops are dispersed in garrisons of various sizes along the Rhine and the Danube from source to mouth. Danger threatens everywhere from without, and society is in full transformation within. New conditions must necessarily have as a result a transformation of the frontiers. The dissolution of the empire goes on parallel with the social reorganization of its content, in connection with the internal and external conditions of the latter.

Religious and philosophical beliefs were in continuous correlation with the evolution already passed through, and with that which was in progress.

Just as the fosse around the primitive towns was the *mundus*, at first the strictly inviolable circle of social life, so under the empire the "Roman world," including its most distant extremities, was such a life-circle. At its boundaries all social assimilation ceased to be possible. However great the Roman city became, whatever was its force of expansion, it was always limited. At its apogee as at the beginning, its limitations are very rigid. It has a belt of strong castles and of military colonies wherever physical obstacles do not afford sufficient means of defense. In fact, there is so little confidence in the latter that at the approach of danger military posts are scattered all along the frontier, even where there are large rivers and high mountains.

In the midst of this world, so broad that to the eyes of the great mass of its inhabitants it might well have seemed limitless, a homogeneous social life developed itself progressively by the extension of the great routes of commerce; by the necessity of a more and more intensive production, both agricultural and industrial; by the slow fusion of human varieties; by the fusion of usages of customs, of divinities, and even of philosophies; by

the application of a uniform law, and of a strongly centralized political and administrative regulation. The "great Roman peace" was a period unique in the history of human societies, at least in a civilization on so large a scale. The citizens of this Roman world might well have cherished the illusion that this world did not have frontiers, since they were so distant, and any conflicts which arose with the regions beyond made so little impression in the central regions. What they could not see was that not only at the exterior did Roman civilization have its limits, not merely military or political properly speaking, and still others more or less extended than the military limits; but that in the interior of Roman society an enormous differentiation of the functions of social life was taking place in correlation with the development of territorial extension and of the mass of the population. This differentiation of the functions of social life had necessitated an adequate organic differentiation, and consequently an enormous multiplication of structures and internal delimitations unknown and non-existent before. If Roman development had been simply a development in mass and in extent, without internal organic differentiation, it would have had no interest for the historian and the sociologist. But the evolution of the frontiers of Roman civilization was always correlated with its internal evolution. The two were in continuous and variable equilibration, and there was at the same time progressive adjustment with the exterior world.

Then as now the political theorists and the philosophers, considering chiefly the most apparent external aspect—the frontier in its purely military and political factors, which is like the protective shell of all the internal portions of this great social body, the envelope of which they even lost consciousness in proportion to its distance from the superior centers, and also losing from view that this envelope is not only an organ of separation and of defense, but also an organ of relation and of adaptation with the exterior world whose existence they ignored—fell into complete idealism. They arrived at the absolute negation of frontiers, at universal equality and fraternity, as though all barriers, all inequalities, not merely physical and ethnical, but social, had com-

pletely disappeared, or at least were about to vanish. But, in spite of the increasing equality of purely civic and political conditions, under the leveling influence of the same imperial system, the real limits between classes and interests had perhaps never been more pronounced. Nor had the social organization been more highly differentiated, and hence necessarily limited in each of its functions by coexistent institutions and forms. And everywhere, from the stage of simple associations, corporations of laborers, up to the formation of powerful commercial and financial societies and of various colleges, religious, political, and others, the whole internal social structure was in the aggregate firmly closed and organized in elaborate gradations. Only the torpid feudal and Catholic Middle Age, and then the later constitution of absolute monarchies, could suffice to bring attention back to the stern reality, the appreciation of which Stoicism and then primitive Christianity had lost, while their moral ideal, although high, was fatally lacking in positive content.

Already with Diogenes, when the Greek city was founded in the empire of Alexander, the school of the Cynics had ignored patriotism. The Epicureans were also uninterested in public affairs. Man was to them a citizen of the universe. He did not cast his lot with any definite social group. Diogenes boasted of having no rights of citizenship. Crates extended this cosmopolitan individualism to every community, even that of thought. His country was in the contempt of the vulgar human mass. The *super-man* is not an invention of our century. The theory is formulated especially in the Stoic philosophy, which thus became a philosophy or general conception of the social world. Man supplants the citizen. Seneca, Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, Zeno, have for their country the world. All men, including slaves, descend from the same god, all are brothers, according to Epicurus. It was a general mollifying of the ancient law of the classes. Christianity was the product of this dissolution of ancient institutions and beliefs. It was communistic, and in this sense it represents a remarkable effort to articulate the new moral and social conception with a superior economic law. But its fraternal idealism presently clothed itself with an authoritative form

at first moral, then more and more temporal. It had to adapt itself to the social environment. It submitted little by little to authorities, up to the day when, having itself become powerful, it became Catholicism. Then also it proved not only that the frontiers of a belief may be more extended than the bounds of the temporal sovereignty of the chief of this faith, but that they may extend beyond the frontiers of a considerable number of separate political sovereignties. What was proved in that case for religion will be proved later in a universal measure for science, and at last for the world-economy which is destined to be the effective and secure basis of that unity which neither empires nor religions can realize—the principle of authority being too feeble to serve as bond of union for the infinite variety of forms and of functions which the republic of the human race presupposes.

[To be continued]